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PARTNERS IN JUSTICE: A COLLOQUIUM ON DEVELOPING COLLABORATIONS AMONG COURTS, LAW SCHOOL CLINICAL PROGRAMS AND THE PRACTICING BAR

INTRODUCTION

CHIEF JUDGE JUDITH S. KAYE*

These pages represent a dream come true: a collaboration across the spectrum of our marvelous profession on a subject that advances the work of each group. Without question, each of us is better able to serve the public when we work together. Additionally, we now have a stark reminder not only of the pleasure of our time together at the Judicial Institute in Spring 2005, but also of the task that remains ahead regarding collateral consequences. Our thanks to the *N.Y.U. Review of Law & Social Change* for being part of this joint effort.

I think genesis is a good place to start, so I'll begin by articulating the idea behind last Spring's convocation. Judges, practitioners, and law professors each toil in a separate way to achieve the great American ideal of justice for all. We share so many interests and concerns, beginning with the right to counsel, effective representation, and professional values like pro bono service. We care so much about ensuring access to justice. We care about meaningful representation, about recidivism, about the downward life-spiral of so many litigants and their families. We have common goals and objectives. We have a common commitment to working within the legal system to secure justice on an individual basis, and on a societal basis.

Our three groups are full partners in that sense, yet we labor in separate spheres that, more often than not, come together in the clash of litigation—a triangle of battling zealous advocates before a detached neutral magistrate. When is it that we convene, all of us, to contemplate exactly how, together, we might better serve the objectives to which each of us is singly dedicated? Shouldn't we be doing more of that?

That, in short, was the idea that generated the convocation—that we can raise one another's sensitivities, one another's capacities; that our separate perspectives and experiences can enlarge one another's vision and make each of us more effective in what we do. And I could think of no more fitting subject for chapter one of our collaboration than "collateral consequences of criminal

* Chief Judge of the State of New York; Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of the State of New York. This introduction was written shortly before publication, in March 2006.

convictions.” That subject, perhaps more than any other, touches every single one of us, whether in law school clinical programs, or in community services, or in the courts. And it cuts across every field of criminal and civil practice.

It’s always a good thing to state the challenge right at the outset so that everyone can keep it clearly in mind as we turn to the particulars. The challenge, the hope, is that our collaboration will produce concrete suggestions both for addressing the problem at hand—collateral consequences of criminal convictions—and for continuing our work together, even expanding it into other areas. Face it, if *you* can’t find answers, nobody can.

I conclude where I began—with profound thanks to every single one of you for today, for bringing us this far. But even more, I thank all of you for tomorrow—for the excellent results that will come of our collaboration and for our work ahead.